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SUBJECT: IOM IN CHAD: NEEDS MORE STAFF AND RESOURCES TO SUPPORT
GROUP RESETTLEMENT OPERATIONS

SUMMARY

¶1. (SBU) Accra and N'Djamena RefCoords have found that, in the continued absence of permanent staff to manage the USG's resettlement program for Central African and Sudanese Refugees in Chad, IOM's temporary staff are increasingly overwhelmed. We have requested acting IOM Chief of Mission in Chad to prepare a report on IOM's plans to properly staff and resource the office and assess their capacity to support group resettlement within the current timeframe. Ambassador Nigro has agreed to meet with Tonneau, should that be necessary, to underscore the importance of adequately and appropriately staffing and resourcing IOM to achieve USG resettlement goals. END SUMMARY.

ASSESSMENT

¶2. (SBU) Following meetings with IOM Chad Acting Chief of Mission Qasim Suffi, the Refugee Coordinators are concerned that the IOM Chad mission lacks the necessary capacity to implement any significant operations in Chad at this time. Immediate action is needed to appropriately staff and resource IOM Chad if IOM is to be able to safely operate the Abeche refugee transit center and facilitate departure flights. Immediate action is also needed to keep on the current schedule and depart 1,000 individuals from Chad in FY10. Any delay in staffing will necessitate a delay in processing, exacerbating the protection and safety issues facing the refugees, as well as causing a shortfall in departures.

¶3. (SBU) At present, IOM is operating out of a room in the courtyard of the Hotel Shanghai, with computer and internet access through a neighboring cyber caf. In order to maintain communications with partners and with the field, IOM needs to establish an appropriate communications infrastructure. Although an office space has been rented, it is not complete, and the current arrangement is completely inadequate to conduct any reasonable operations.

¶4. (SBU) Staffing is at present completely inadequate to accomplish the current resettlement project, and cannot confront the preparations for moving into the next phase. Only one international position, the P3 Security Officer, is staffed. One other international position, a P2 Operations Officer, is filled by a national staff member from the region who it is hoped will become an international staff member and remain assigned to Chad. TDY support has been provided from Accra, by the Senior Regional Medical Officer and the Senior Regional Operations Officer. However, the temporary placement of individuals with full regional portfolios has proven inadequate. Due to their particular qualifications, background,

lack of resources and regional responsibilities, they have not succeeded in creating a functional operation. Due to the lack of other resources, the acting Chief of Mission is also conducting pre-departure medical exams and accompanying refugees to the U.S. as a medical escort.

15. (SBU) Local staffing is also limited, with two local staff in Abeche, one in Gore and one in N'djamena. This may have had an impact on what appeared to be a fragile water supply system at the Abeche transit center when RefCoord visited it in September, which required water truck delivery to fill a 3,500 liter stand-by reservoir every 1.5 days due to the intermittent functioning of the Abeche city water supply to the compound. Residents were taking jerry cans to a city water point outside the compound during our visit; the plan to install a pump in an existing well inside the compound to provide washing water has still not been implemented a month later.

16. (SBU) Despite requests for IOM to fill key Chad positions (and assurances from IOM that everything is appropriately in progress), only the Chief of Mission and two P2-level Operations Officer positions (N'djamena and Abeche) are advertised. The critical Senior Operations Officer position has not yet been posted. There have been admirable successes during the pilot and in the current phase; to date there have been 127 refugee departures from Chad and nearly two hundred individuals were brought to Abeche for prescreening and returned. IOM experienced and overcame many challenges during the pilot phase. However, many problems were repeated during the transportation for prescreening in Abeche in late September to early October. Although IOM claimed to have prepared a plan, they had not conducted a road assessment and struggled at the last minute to get the refugees to the site.

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During the return movements from the transit center to the camps, it appears that IOM again failed to share a movement plan with UNHCR, although fortunately the refugees returned without incident.

17. (SBU) Security procedures remain a concern, particularly following a parental abduction at the transit center in July. We have received reports about inappropriate visitors on the compound, and the IOM N'djamena office is unaware of security SOPs (if established). There have been gaps in reporting of security incidents and threats to partners. Refcoords will hold additional meetings with the IOM Security Officer to review security policies and close existing gaps.

IOM - UNHCR RELATIONS

18. (SBU) Relations between UNHCR and IOM have deteriorated; to the extent that IOM appears incapable of effectively protecting refugees while facilitating operations, UNHCR requires continued involvement in IOM's affairs. IOM expressed some resentment that they weren't trusted. (Refcoords reiterated that UNHCR has responsibility and accountability for refugee protection and it was appropriate for them to request information and incumbent upon IOM to provide it, and to intervene when IOM operations were clearly lacking sufficient preparations to avoid putting refugees and staff in danger).

19. (SBU) With present resources, IOM could continue the departures for the remainder of the refugees interviewed during the first circuit ride (pending SAOs or Med clearances), although even this requires improved planning and implementation, to ensure the safety the refugees and staff. Other plans for follow-on phases simply cannot be undertaken with current staff and need to be reassessed. The 44 cases/ 197 persons from eastern camps that were prescreened in October were to be adjudicated in late December/early January, together with approximately 30 cases/120 persons in the south (to be prescreened in December). This would require that IOM be able to appropriately plan for and conduct movements in both locations. To meet the US target of facilitating 1,000 departures from Chad during FY10, we would need to begin group processing, with prescreening in March and adjudications in May. This requires that appropriate office and refugee transit facilities be built from scratch and

completed in advance, which would require that construction begin before mid-November. Land for the transit center has yet to be identified by the government of Chad. Without appropriate permanent staff, IOM is unlikely to succeed in locating, building or managing the larger transit center and office facility.

¶10. (SBU) IOM's Director of International Operations Michel Tonneau will be in Chad next week to sign an MOU between IOM and the Government of Chad to establish the IOM mission. Refcoords have scheduled a meeting with him. Ambassador Nigro has stated he is open to meeting with to Tonneau should that be necessary, to underscore the importance of appropriately staffing and resourcing IOM.

¶11. (U) Minimize considered.

NIGRO